



MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

P.O. Box 30235, Lansing, MI 48909 | PH: 517.371.1041 | FAX: 517.371.1505 | www.mucc.org

#6 2-3-16

February 1, 2016

RE: Comments on House Bill 5275

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this House bill before the House Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee.

Michigan is blessed with more than 4.5 million acres of public land owned by the citizens of our state, behind only Florida among states east of the Mississippi River. The various uses of these lands need to be balanced and there is plenty of room for everyone, though not all uses are compatible with each other at the same place and time.

While access to these lands is important for hunting, fishing and trapping, there are many different modes of access and those modes must be balanced with the habitat needs of the wildlife we pursue, both for the benefit of wildlife, keeping game species on public land, and the hunting experience and tactics required to hunt them. Additionally, the use of hunter and angler license dollars, used to acquire and maintain wildlife habitat, should not be diverted to other uses, and the funds needed to fight forest fires cannot afford to be diverted.

MUCC would like to offer the following comments, support, and suggestions for amendments to this legislation.

- MUCC supports the concept of allowing the use of pack and saddle animals to retrieve large game from public lands, as this is part of a wildlife-based activity, as well as the speed restriction of 5 mph for ORV's retrieving large game from public land where allowed, **PROVIDED that such allowances remain subject to DNR land use orders and individual state forest management plans.**
- MUCC also supports the concept of the DNR creating an inventory our forest roads. **This has already been incorporated into the DNR Managed Land Strategy (2013) as a measurable objective for providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities:** "Completion of a road plan that ensures motorized and non-motorized access to public land." Rather than implementing specific provisions of the DNR Managed Land Strategy through piecemeal legislation, however, the Legislature should pass clean legislation to approve the DNR Managed Land Strategy that it required of the DNR through PA 240 of 2012 and lift the land cap on northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula that it conditioned on its own approval of the plan under the same legislation.

- The USFS has successfully completed a component of this type of inventory with their Motor Vehicle Use Maps, which are available online, to communicate to the public where they are allowed to drive within the National Forest System. This effort will necessarily require a substantial amount of staff time and some investment in technology to complete this initiative. We strongly encourage you to support General Fund/General Purpose funding over the implementation period to support this effort.
- MUCC's biggest concern is that this legislation changes an assumed "closed unless open" policy for forest roads in the Northern Lower Peninsula immediately upon enactment to "open unless closed," similar to the Upper Peninsula. This may put us our State Forest dual certification in jeopardy and potentially put Michigan in a diversion situation with regards to Pittman Robertson and Game and Fish purchased lands if we suddenly allow these roads to open that may be closed to protect wildlife habitat and hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities on public lands. The DNR will need sufficient time to prepare orders to close roads that must remained closed for these purposes, and given the enhanced public notification requirements, we feel that this will require *at least* a year after the inventory of forest roads is completed. Suggested amendment language is listed below.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our suggestions. Public land access and management is perhaps the biggest issue facing hunters today, as without accessible public land which also provides high-quality wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities, a substantial percentage of Michigan's hunters would not have a place to hunt, which is often cited among the top reasons why people stop hunting or never start.

We are happy to review revised language in advance of moving these bills out of committee.

Submitted by Drew YoungeDyke, Chief Information Officer
dyoungedyke@mucc.org or 517-346-6486

Suggested bill amendments;

- HB 5275, page 5 line 22: adding "BY DECEMBER 31, 2019,"

